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January 15, 2004

Air and Radiation Docket  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Mail Code: 6102T  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460  
Attention: Docket ID No. OAR 2003-0090

Dear Sir or Madam,

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (Department) fully supports the ozone early action process and respectfully requests that the first round of deferrals be approved. South Carolina leads the nation in areas participating in this process to proactively address air quality improvement. The Department and 45 counties across the state have committed, along with EPA Region 4, to this approach. To date all milestones have been met and steady progress is being made to ensure that we achieve all milestones and the goal of cleaner air. Most importantly, while we will be submitting a plan that will demonstrate attainment with the 8-hour ozone standard by 2007, citizens of SC will realize air quality improvements beginning in April of 2005, when controls will be implemented.

Currently, regulations have been proposed that will result in statewide reductions of ozone forming pollutants. In addition to this statewide effort, there are numerous activities being implemented across the state that will tackle these pollutants at the local level and are tailored to the specific needs of the communities. The large majority of the areas represented in the South Carolina Compacts continue to meet all ambient standards, but recognize the importance of a proactive effort in maintaining clean air. Their plans are being developed with broad local stakeholder involvement. The citizens, local leaders, and business community support having clean air. The ozone early action process establishes a mechanism for accomplishing this in an expedited manner and which makes sense for the given area.

Regardless of what boundary lines are drawn for non-attainment purposes, our State stands committed to providing cleaner air sooner to the citizens of South Carolina. We hope that you will continue to support us, other states, and local areas in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

R. Lewis Shaw, P.E., Deputy Commissioner  
Environmental Quality Control